

“Good morning. I am Congresswoman Linda Sánchez from California, vice-chair of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Civil Rights Task Force.

“This week, President Bush nominated Judge Samuel Alito to serve on the United States Supreme Court to fill the vacancy left by Justice Sandra Day O’Connor. This is a lifetime appointment to the highest court in our country. The Supreme Court’s decisions have a profound impact on our civil rights and liberties now and in the future.

“Since our country is comprised of people from a number of nationalities and cultures, I believe that our highest court should reflect that diversity. The Hispanic community is the largest minority group in the United States, but we are grossly under-represented in the judicial branch.

“When Justice O’Connor announced her retirement, Hispanics asked the President, on various occasions, to consider a qualified Hispanic for the Supreme Court. The Hispanic community has many lawyers, judges, and outstanding legal scholars who are eminently qualified to be a Justice of the United States Supreme Court. This is the third time that President Bush ignored our community and missed a historic opportunity to nominate a qualified Hispanic to the Supreme Court to satisfy the extreme right wing of his party.

“The radical right wing rejected Harriet Miers because she wasn’t conservative enough. This is why the President has nominated someone even more conservative. This nomination raises serious concerns for our community’s rights and well being. The President’s priority, however, is to follow the desires of this extreme group.

“Judge Alito now has the responsibility to demonstrate his commitment to our civil rights and equal access to education. In addition, he must demonstrate that he has the qualifications to deal with the problems and concerns of our community, and that he is suitable for a lifetime position on the Supreme Court.

“President Bush has also failed our community when it comes to creating jobs, providing health care security, and his poor response to help the survivors of Hurricane Katrina. On immigration, President Bush has not stood up against the vicious anti-immigrant attacks from the far right of his party in Congress.

“I am disappointed with the President’s decision and I am very concerned with the direction that the Supreme Court could take with a Justice Alito. It is also frustrating to see how little importance the President gives to the Latino community and the lack of interest in integrating us into all aspects of society.

“Democrats have always stood up for the interests of Latino families and all hard working Americans. Our vision of equality and opportunity contrasts with the culture of corruption and cronyism that Republicans have brought to Congress, the federal government, and now, the Supreme Court.

“Together, America Can Do Better!

“Democrats will continue to support policies that help all Americans — especially Latinos — achieve the American Dream.

“I am Congresswoman Linda Sánchez from California. Thank you for listening.”